A Synopsis on

A STUDY OF MULTICULTURALISM IN THE SELECTED NOVELS OF JHUMPA LAHIRI AND ANITA RAU BADAMI

Submitted to

Swami Ramanand Teerth Marathwada University, Nanded

For the registration of

Ph. D in English

Under the faculty of Humanities

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December 2022

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Introduction

The most creative creature of God in this earth is human being who produces creativity in the forms of art and literature. Literature is the supreme medium to express peoples' inner thoughts, ideas, sorrows and happiness, give massages, educate and to enlighten the mankind. So, it is said that literature is the mirror of human being and a society where reflects all aspects of human being and society. Literature reflects social, political, economic, and cultural realities of the time. Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2008) defines Literature as written artistic words, especially those with a high lasting artistic value. So, literature enables us to explore the world that the author presents with his/her artistic words. The society, experiences, joys, sorrows and sufferings of people, events, culture, socio-political and economic scenario, ups and downs of mankind all that reflects in the literary works. According to Alfred Whitehead, "It is in literature that concrete outlook of the humanity receives its expression." Hence, literature is the depiction of humanity and enables us to see true colours of society. Literature reflects both bright and dark side of society and people from which mankind enjoys the positivity and realise the mistakes. It is literature that allows us to go back in time, look forward to the future and understand the present. The author of a particular literary work produces his piece of work with a definite purpose. Similarly, a reader explores a literary piece of work for his or her own purpose where the reader gets the author's idea and finds his own idea. It's the reader who gets new insight, new outlook or dimensions after exploring the literary piece of work. Every time literary works appeals the scholars to find out new insight of it. Discovering and rediscovering new elements in the literary works is an ongoing phenomenon of study of literature.

The treasure house of English literature has been enriched by the literary works of Indian Writing in English which is the body of work by the writers in India who write in the English language. Indian Writing in English (IWE) is referred to as Indian English Literature (IEL). Its history started with the works of Henry Louis Vivian Derozio and Michael Madhusudan Dutt. Rabindranath Tagore and Sri Aurobindo geared up the Indian Writing in English followed by R. K. Narayan, Mulk

Raj Anand and Raja Rao who contributed to the development of Indian English fiction during 1930s. 'The Travels of Dean Mahomet' written by Sake Dean Mahomed who was a Bengali traveller, surgeon, entrepreneur and one of the most notable early non-European immigrants to the Western World (Mohomet 1794, 148-149, 155-156, 160), published in 1794, was the first book written by an Indian in English. Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's Rajmohan's Wife which was published in 1864 is regarded as the first Indian novel written in English. After this the flow of Indian writings in English is continuing till the date. The early stage of Indian writings in English was flourished by the Indian authors like Lal Behari Dey, Toru Dutt and Satthianadhan. Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore, Chittaranjan Das, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Mahatma Gandhi and Subhas Chandra Bose, to name only a few, shaped the destiny of modern India and also the destiny of English language in India (Auddy, 9-10). Kisari Mohan Ganguli, Rabindranath Tagore, Dhan Gopal Mukerji, Nirad C. Chaudhuri, P. Lal, Ram Nath Kak forwarded the Indian English literature. In the recent years the Indian diasporan contribution is remarkable. the Indian diaspora writing tradition is an immerging trend of Indian English literature and Indian writers such as Anita Desai, Vikram Seth, Bharati Mukherjee, Shauna Singh Baldwin, Amitav Ghosh, Salman Rushdie, Meena Alexander, Vikram Chandra, Jeet Thayil, Jasbir Jain, Aravind Adiga, Uma Parameswaran, Ajay K. Chaubey, Malti Agarwal, Ajaya Kumar Sahoo, Anjana Appachana, Suketu Mehta, Indra Sinha, Easterine Kire, Kiran Desai, Sunetra Gupta, Anita Nair, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, Jhumpa Lahiri, and Anita Rau Badami, have penned and flourished Indian English literature as well as Indian diaspora writing tradition.

Multiculturalism

Multi means many and culture means the idea, custom and social behaviour of a particular society or people. So, multiculturalism stands for assimilation of different cultures which includes idea, custom and social behaviour of society. When we try to understand the meaning of multiculturalism, it is found that multiculturalism is a thought that support, uphold and acknowledge different identities and cultural groups in a society. It is a marginalisation of different races, classes, sexes, nationalities, languages, religions, etc. It granted the equal rights to the people from different cultures and a common political culture that all can participate. Multiculturalism entails the acceptance of disparity found in cultural diversity. So, diversity within

unity is one of the major characteristics of multiculturalism. According to *The Harper Collins Dictionary of Sociology* (1991) "…the acknowledgement and promotion of cultural pluralism...multiculturalism celebrates and seeks to promote cultural variety, for example minority languages. At the same time, it focuses on the unequal relationship of minority to mainstream cultures" (11). Ashok Chaskar, in his book, *Multiculturalism in Indian Fiction,* in English (2010) states that, Multiculturalism is not an intellectual discipline but a movement for social change. (Chaskar, 2010). Bhikhu Parekh the author of *Rethinking Multiculturalism: Cultural Diversity and Political theory*, says "It is neither a political doctrine nor a philosophical issue but actually a perspective on as a way of viewing human life. Increasing cultural diversity focuses on the promotion of rights for different religions and cultural groups. The rights for cultural groups form basis for multiculturalism" (Parekh, 2000). Ilan Stavans, a Jewish- American, writes a letter to his son in which he states:

> My son, you will certainly live in an age in which the fruits of multiculturalism will be flavourful… multiculturalism, I' have no doubt, is a benign weapon. It is my belief that multiculturalism will be an entrance door to a more human world. (*The Hispanic Condition: Reflection on Culture and Identity in America* 198-99)

In the contexts of Sociology and Political Philosophy, it conveys varied meaning. In sociology it refers to ethnic and cultural pluralism in which cultural and ethnic diversity is exist. In political philosophy it refers to "salad bowl" and as a "cultural mosaic"] in contrast to a "melting pot" theory. Melting pot theory suggests that like metals where different types of people, cultures tend to melt or assimilate into a cohesive whole. In melting pot the land becomes a pot for immigrates where they along with their culture blend together as one and form a new unique culture. The melting pot theory is often illustrated by the metaphor of a foundry's smelting pots in which the elements iron and carbon are melted together to create a single, stronger metal - steel. In 1782, French-American immigrant J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur wrote that in America, "individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world." One the other hand Salad bowl theory which is more liberal theory of multiculturalism than the melting pot theory, the salad bowl theory suggests a diverse society in which people coexist but retain at least some of the unique characteristics of

their traditional culture. Like a salad's ingredients, different cultures are brought together, but rather than coalescing into a single homogeneous culture, retain their own distinct flavours. According to C. W. Watson "The alternative to any attempt to create a monocultural society is to celebrate and encourage multiculturalism in the expectation that citizens who are proud of their culture and see that culture being endorsed by the state will be anxious to join in common citizenship with members of other cultural groups to protect the liberal tolerance which is so important for them." (*Multiculturalism* 3)

The idea of multiculturalism is not a new one. Its existence of it is found since ancient times. Cyrus the Great who founded the Achaemenid Empire followed a policy of incorporating and tolerating various cultures. *(Menek, Ibrahim Halil, May 2020).* The Ancient Habsburg monarchy is a historical example of multiculturalism where different ethnic, linguistic and religious groups lived together and believed in "live and let live". It was 1960, when the idea of multiculturalism as a state policy first emerged in Canada and in the year 1971 it became official government policy of Canada. Later in 1973 Australia followed the same policy and most of the European states started to adopt the similar state policy which paved the way of multiculturalism. Gradually many nation-states in Africa, Asia, America, United Kingdom, Germany, Spain, and France started to accept and adopt the concept multiculturalism.

When multiculturalism has been accepting globally and due to globalisation along with advancement of science, technology, transportation and communication, trade, education, etc people from different parts of the glob has shifted or migrated to another region of the world for different reasons and conditions. The global world of today attracts people of different parts of the world to the Western and European and countries to have advanced and better life. The shifting of people from their own land to another land becomes a continuous flow which is gearing up the multiculturalism. As happenings of the world is recorded in literature since the time immoral in various form and images of the people living in alien land is been portrayed by the writers, specially the authors who himself/herself a part of this situation are perfectly painted the picture of the migrated people. Hence, at present, the reflection of multiculturalism in literary texts is found very often, especially in the literature of diasporic writer. Multiculturalism or assimilation of culture is portrayed by various

authors in their texts where they have established the multiculturalism in such a way that the readers of homeland and alien land accept and welcome it. This migration has also produced one another genre of literature – diasporic literature.

The term Diaspora 'is originated from the Greek verb *diaspeirō*. The Greek word *Dia* stands for "between, through, across" and the verb *speirō* stands for "I sow, I scatter". In Ancient Greece the term diaspora hence meant "scattering". Thus, the term diaspora refers to dispersion or migration of an individual or community from its original place to another place. Originally it was used for "the dispersed Jews after the Babylonian Captivity, and also in the apostolic age for the Jews living outside of Palestine." *(Cambridge 20th Century Dictionary)*. At present daisporans are seen as having migrated either forcibly, as in the case of Afro-Caribbean people, or willingly as in order to have a better prospect in life and career.

In contemporary literature the term Diasporic literature or writing is used for the works produced by the globally dispersed minority communities having common ancestral homeland. So, Diasporic works are those works which are produced by the authors who are living outside their homeland, but these works are associated with their native culture and its background. Diasporic literature occurs in the sense of loss and alienation which invented as a result of migration and expatriation. Alienation, displacement, cultural exchange, multiculturalism, cultural hybridity, quest of identity, nostalgia, amalgamation of disintegration of cultures is the issues reflect in diasporic literature.

At present time South Asian Diaspora is sociologically acknowledged phenomenon where people from Indian subcontinent are scattering various area of the globe. The literature produced by the diasporans belongs to Indian subcontinent, recognize as the literature of South Asian diaspora which is a minority discourse that is surfacing with urgency in the field of cultural studies in the world. To precede a cultural study of South Asian diasporic writings, especially Indian diasporic texts, multiculturalism is one of the most appropriate aspects of this literature as Indian Diasporic writers fictionalise multiculturalism in their writings, much like writers of other groups. Diasporic writers themselves face and adopt the multiculturalism in their society of adopted land. That's why the diasporic writers have first-hand experience that they can pertinently describe in their literary works than others.

Portrayal, reflection, depiction of multiculturalism in the writings of the diasporic authors is obvious as cultural exchange and assimilation is must for the diasporans and it is a call of hour to carry forward the cultural study on the basis of multiculturalism by exploring the literary texts of Indian diasporic writers. Having been in an alien land the diasporic writers never forget their native culture as the cultural depiction of their native land is found in every single works. Though the delineation of multiculturalism is not only in the novels, it is somewhat true to say that fictional description is more subtle.

B] Research Problem

1. Whether Multiculturalism and its various aspects are projected in the selected novels of the respective novelists?
2. Whether economic, socio-cultural and religious aspects are dealt by the respective writers and if yes then at what point do they come close and what point do they differ?
3. What will be the theoretical and practical scenario of multicultural conditions of life, deeply rooted in the psyche of contemporary generations and how were the conditions aftermaths?
4. Whether multiculturalism and diaspora have a close relation and if so, then to what extent its impact can be found?
5. How do the novelists consider the issues of multiculturalism elements?
6. How the authors justify their works to both native and alien land?

C] Objectives of Research

1. The proposed research will study the selected novels of Jhumpa Lahiri and Anita Rau Badami from the perspective of multiculturalism elements.
2. The present study would delineate upon the numerous facts and dimensions of ‘multiculturalism’ in the selected novels of Jhumpa Lahiri and Anita Rau Badami.
3. The proposed research will analyze and reframe the values of multiculturalism in an elaborative way.
4. The study will establish Jhumpa Lahiri and Anita Rau Badami as an eminent writer in area of cultural study in literature and multiculturalism.

5. The research work will make a comparison of the selected novels of designated authors in the light multiculturalism.
6. Notwithstanding, it would also provide a constructive conclusion to the research topic undertaken.

D] Hypothesis

1. The present research attempts to develop a systematic evaluation of Jhumpa Lahiri and Anita Rau Badami's selected monumental and important novels revolving around in the field of English literature in general and Indian English literature in particular.
2. The idea, multiculturalism is undoubtedly presented by the Indian writers without disturbing the native readers of alien land.
3. A comparative approach of multiculturalism would delineate a perfect, comprehensive understanding of multicultural society reflected in the selected novels on the larger canvas.
4. It would create a communal harmony and universal identity among the people across the world

E] Data, Scope and Limitations

The present research primarily based on the availability of primary and secondary sources. It will embrace all the pervasive phenomena of multiculturalism and relevant perspectives to the same. However, it will be a limited study of selected novels of Jhumpa Lahiri and Anita Rau Badami. If it necessitates, the research can be extended by including more texts by similar authors. The research will be flexible enough to include more multicultural perspectives as per the necessity and findings of the research. Rationally it will be a relevant study of selected perspectives in designated authors.

F] Research Methodology

Research methodology that will be employed in the proposed research work will be based on both primary and secondary data. Basically, the study will be analytical and based on critical analysis of the selected novels of Jhumpa Lahiri and Anita Rau Badami. To reach the conclusions both descriptive and analytical method

will be used. The primary sources will be the texts of the novels of selected novelist of the research work. The secondary sources will be articles, research papers, critical books, journals, book reviews, newspaper, critical reviews and e-content etc.

G] Justification of Research

The proposed research will bring larger benefits and interest to the students, knowledge seekers, researchers and aspirants in the field of English literature. The same would explore on different perspectives of multiculturalism employed by designated novelists. It will bring forth numerous voices and echoes of multiculturalism under different conditions. It will clearly identify, interpret and constructively analyse findings of multiculturalism in selected novelists. The study, indeed, will explore larger canvas of multiculturalism for the students of literature to build their comprehensive and in-depth understanding of multiculturalism. At the same time, it will also fill the blanks to fill up the gap of understanding with supportive facts and findings of this research.

H] Pedagogical Implications

The research in the domain of multiculturalism undertaken in relevance with selected novelist will provide an ample ground for formative discussion of multiculturalism in the study. It will explore and discuss the background and theory of multiculturalism and diaspora. Jhumpa Lahiri and Anita Rau Badami have brilliantly projected the picture and conditions of multiculturalism through the protagonist and other characters. The study will highlight various layers of interpretation of multiculturalism under different circumstances in the novels. The study of multiculturalism will be helpful to relocate, reframe and analyse the contemporary issues to the field of cultural study of Indian English literature and a step ahead of creating communal harmony and spreading humanity globally. Thus, it would be helpful to the students, researchers, critics and aspirants of English literatures and, those who are seeking their interest to understand multiculturalism to its fullest possible extent will be benefited largely through the formative study in the area.

I] Tentative Chapter Scheme

Chapter 1: Introduction

The first chapter will discuss the origin, meaning and history of multiculturalism and its global significance at present time. It will present a concise history of Indian writings in English in general and Indian diasporic authors in particular. The theory of multiculturalism and diaspora will be discussed in the chapter for a better understanding of selected novelist and their novels, proposed for the study. Besides, this chapter will discuss life and works of the designated novelist Jhumpa Lahiri and Anita Rau Badami. Furthermore, the chapter will contain a literature review on various research papers published in National and International journals, referred journals, books, interviews of authors in magazine, newspapers, journals and critical reviews etc which are related to the proposed research work**.**

Chapter 2: Multiculturalism in the selected novels of Jhumpa Lahiri

The Second Chapter will analyse the Jhumpa Lahiri's selected novels *The Namesake* (2003), *The Lowland* (2013) and *Whereabout* (2021) to explore and delineate the reflection of multiculturalism.

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Jhumpa Lahiri's debut novel *The Namesake* explores the struggle of Indian originated family to reconcile themselves in America with their culture and heritage. It is a story of two generations of Ganguli's family of Indian immigrants to United States of America. Though, nostalgia, quest for identity, displacement is the themes of the novel, theme of cultural is one of the major themes of the novel. The novelist presents the multicultural society and its different aspects in the novel very aptly.

The Lowland is also one of the most acclaimed novels of Jhumpa Lahiri. The main theme of the novel is dislocation, assimilation, family connection and difficulties of love of two brothers, Subhas and Udayan Mitra. Multiculturalism, in the novel *The Lowland* is depicted in the context of Indian society and culture.

Lahiri's one of the exceptional novels *Whereabout*, originally composed in Italian and later translated into English by herself. The novel portrays the daily life of

a 40 years old lonely female university teacher of an unnamed place by an unnamed narrator. Though the theme, multiculturalism and its related aspects are not clearly depicted in the novel sincere effort will be made to analyse to come out with the relevant issues.

Chapter 3: Multiculturalism in the selected novels of Anita Rau Badami

The Third Chapter will carry out a descriptive study of Anita Rau Badami's selected novels *Can You Hear The Nightbird Call*? (2006) *Tamarind Mem* (2004) *The Hero's Walk* (2000) to find out and discuss multiculturalism in the novels.

The novel *Tamarind Mem* revolves the story of two generations related to mother Saroja and her daughter Kamini. It is divided into two parts, one narrated by Saroja and the other by Kamini. Though the author rejects that '*Tamarind Mem'* is not an autobiography, the story of the novel similar to Badami's own life. The novel portrays the Indian cultures and its values. It is about quest for identity, culture, nostalgia, and multicultural.

The Hero's walk narrates about ones loss, disappointment and adjustment to the circumstances without losing one's dignity endowed in one's life. The novel portrays the story of Sripati Rao, his wife Nirmala and their families. It depicts the shifting from global to local through Nandana who shifted to the Indian traditional culture. Badami presents the story of Nandana, a modern girl from Canada came to an orthodox Indian family and the struggle for culture. Both the Indian and Canadian culture is depicted by the author and the theme of identity, culture and family is well reflected.

Badami's *The Nightbird Call?* has portrayed the love and tragedy of three women Sharan, Leela and Nimmo during the time of partition of Indian and Pakistan and explosion of Air India flight 182 off the coast of Ireland in 1985. Through the characters the author has depicted the life and culture of Indian immigrants to Canada who shifted for having a better life. Multi culture is one of the major themes in the novel which the author has shown very keenly.

Chapter 4: A Comparative Approach to the selected novels of Jhumpa Lahiri and Anita Rau Badami

The chapter - 4 will make a comparative approach on the major analyses of the earlier chapters regarding the selected novels of Jhumpa Lahiri and Anita Rau Badami. These two diasporic novelists are living in two different countries – in USA and Canada having ancestral link to India. Nilanjana Sudeshna "Jhumpa" Lahiri, born in London and brought up in South Kingstown, Rhode Island and brought up in America is the daughter of Indian immigrants from West Bengal, India. She was aware of her Bengali heritage from her early life. On the other Anita Rau Badami born in Rourkela, Odisha, India to a south Indian Kannada speaking family. She immigrated to Canada with her husband and son in 1991. Both the authors have different socio-political, cultural and religious experience and background as they have shifted to two different countries of the globe from different regions of their native land. Generally, when we explore more than one author's literary works, we get similarities and dissimilarities of their way of presentation, method of portrayal, writing style etc. Hence, a comparative approach will be made on the basis of proposed research work highlighting the comparative literature.

Chapter 5: Conclusions

The final section of the thesis, conclusion, will provide a summation of multiculturalism reflected in the selected novels of Jhumpa Lahiri and Anita Rau Badami. Both the novelist, in their novels, selected for the research, has skilfully painted the multicultural society and the theory, multiculturalism has been aptly put forwarded with a view of having international peace and brotherhood. Through the characters portrayed by the novelist in the selected novels, the novelists have presented the problem faced at the time of entering in a multicultural society, multicultural relations through cross cultural love relations, cultural diversity, nostalgia of the migrants for their homeland, acceptance of new culture of alien land. Both the novelists are diasporan and their writings belong to diasporic literature where multiculturalism is a prominent phenomenon that is fabricated in their novels.

Furthermore, the chapter will provide findings and suggestions, if any as well as the findings of the previous chapters will be elaborately discussed and analysed. The problems and limitations of the study will also be analysed with a statement of

the scope for further studies of multiculturalism in the novels of Jhumpa Lahiri and Anita Rau Badami.

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